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September 5 2005

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #12 (SO12)

(Conflict Reduced in Mindanao and Other Areas Vulnerable to Violence)

Seaweed producers sustain lead in global market

ZAMBOANGA CITY — Seaweed producers, traders, processors and exporters, as well as representatives of concerned government agencies will discuss ways to increase the Philippines' global market share, while also improving quality of seaweed during the sixth Mindanao Seaweed Congress to be held on Sept. 8 and 9.

Sustainable production of quality seaweed, updates on international market opportunities, value chain development for seaweed and product applications for carrageenan will highlight the technical sessions.

Carrageenan, a by-product of seaweed, is used as fat replacer, thickener, emulsion, stabilizer, calorie-controlling dietary substance and gelling agent in the food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries. It is the driving force for growth of the seaweed industry. The chief export markets are the United States, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Korea, China and Hong Kong.

Global demand for carrageenan is projected to grow at an annual rate of 4 to 6 percent in volume and 5 to 7 percent in value, according to Industrial Market Research International, an independent agency that monitors the global hydrocolloid (food sector) industry.

Western Mindanao, especially the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, accounts for 60 percent of the country's production of seaweed.

Mindanao farmers have been adopting strategies to improve quality and make the Philippines the preferred seaweed supplier in the world market. But increased production through the expansion and protection of suitable growing areas complemented by willingness of growers to learn new technologies are keys to the future of the industry.

The sixth Mindanao Seaweed Congress is being organized by the Western Mindanao Seaweed Industry Development Foundation in coordination with the Seaweed Inter-Agency Task Force and supported by USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao Program, Zamboanga City government, Globe Telecom, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corp. and the Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development.

For more information, visit the WMSIDFI Office, Fourth Floor V.H. Wee Building (LandBank), Veterans Avenue, Zamboanga City call (062)991-1049 or e-mail: seaweed@zambonet.ph.

(Source: Manila Standard Today, 9/5/05, page B3)